Research Paper Assignment

Objective: To craft a 2,500 word, thesis-driven research paper on a topic in American Cultural History. There are two parts of this research project: 1) Overview of the Secondary Sources; and 2) Analysis of the Primary Sources.

1) Secondary Source Overview (aka Discussion of the Literature): Students will explore the questions historians have asked about a particular topic or theme in American Cultural History. What questions are historians asking and why? How have those questions and topics changed over time? This discussion of three secondary sources written by historians will comprise the first part of your research paper.

2) Primary Source Analysis: How have historians sought to answer the question you are researching? What sources have they used? In your own research, how do you interpret primary sources and set them in their historical context? In the second part of your research paper you will present your analysis of primary sources that you have discovered doing research on your topic. This analysis of six primary sources will comprise the second part of your research paper.

Thesis: Your analysis of these secondary and primary sources should guide you to make conclusions about what is significant and should therefore frame your argument (thesis).

How to choose a topic: To choose a research topic, consider what areas or themes of cultural history interest you. What questions do you want to ask? What type of primary sources do you want to explore. Why? To help pick a topic, explore A Companion to American Cultural History as well as our Research Guide.

Research Workshop and Guide: Our Upper School Librarian, Ms. Kane, has created an online Research Guide that we will use for our research. This is also a great place to start exploring topic ideas. She will visit our class soon to introduce research methods.
Research Requirements

- You must create a project on NoodleTools for your bibliography and note cards; please “share” your project with me.
- Write your Research Question on the project page and update/revise as you research.
- Tertiary sources, such as Oxford encyclopedias found on our Spence Library database, are excellent ways to gather background knowledge on your topic. The information you gather from these types of sources is considered common knowledge and therefore they will not appear in your citations. Wikipedia or any .com site will not be accepted.
- A minimum of **THREE secondary sources in cultural history** (Annotated on your Bibliography). Choosing appropriate scholarly sources to help you understand your topic is essential to the process, as only then can you adequately choose and interpret your primary sources. Your secondary sources must be written by historians. Your best options will be to read chapters from full-length books (you might not have to read the entire book, ask Ms. Kane or me). In your annotation, identify the background of the author. Please note that most magazines and newspaper articles written by journalists might not be appropriate secondary sources when doing historical research. Please carefully read our class Research Guide on how to choose secondary sources!
- A minimum of **SIX primary sources**. Your complete analysis of these primary sources will allow you to answer your research question and thus provide evidence to support your thesis. Please carefully read our class Research Guide on how to choose primary sources!
- Ms. Kane will be coming to class to help with locating sources and keeping track of notes and sources digitally, and to introduce our Spence Research Guide to U.S. History.
- Set up a one-on-one meeting with Ms. Kane after you have chosen your topic.
Process Meeting all deadlines is required for the process portion of the project grade.

10 Steps For a Successful Research Project (with due dates)

*Most of the steps below are to be completed directly on your NoodleTools project. I will access your project, including your bibliography, and make comments directly on it.*

Step 1: Introduction of assignment: Mon. Sept. 17

Step 2: Research Workshop; How to Find a Topic; Create NoodleTools Project and share with Dr. Smith: Mon. Sept. 17

Step 3: Topic and Research Question (Write this in the "research question" tab at the top of your NoodleTools project page) due: Fri. Oct. 5


Step 5: Secondary Sources Due and meet with Ms. Kane before: Fri. Oct. 19

Step 6: Primary Sources Due: Fri. Nov. 2

Step 7: Annotated Bibliography (3 annotated secondary sources and 5 primary sources) due: Fri. Nov. 16

Step 8: Detailed Outline with Thesis Statement (bring two hard copies to class, we will do a peer review): Fri. Nov. 30

Step 9: Final Paper (see format details below): Fri. Dec. 14, 2018

Information for Detailed Outline with Thesis Statement and Bibliography

Bring TWO hard copies to class. Please use the template provided! Must include:
Thesis Statement (ThSt); Body Paragraphs (BP) with drafts of complete topic sentences (TS) for each BP; bullet points of historical evidence for each BP. You are welcome to make this even more detailed and include what sources you will use to support each piece of evidence. You must submit your bibliography with the detailed outline (export as a Word Doc or Google Doc from NoodleTools).

Format for Final Paper

- Google Doc; Printed out
- Title page with paper title; your name; American Cultural History; Dr. Smith; Date (you are welcome to include a cover image, but no pressure to do so).
- Length: 2,500 words not counting footnotes (approx. 7 pages)
- 1.5 spaced; size 12 font; default margins
- Footnotes--Chicago Manual of Style (Advanced)
- Bibliography--Please create on NoodleTools and export as a Word Doc; attach as a separate page following your paper-- also Chicago style; At least 3 secondary sources and 6 primary sources
- Submit both a hardcopy and share via Google Doc. Your doc file should include: "yourname_ACHpaper"

Acknowledgments--indicate please if you received any outside assistance on this paper